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Message Text

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62
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01

USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 SCS-03 SCA-01 FBIE-00 SY-05

SCCT-01 DHA-02 H-02 /042 W
---------- 114055
R 122043Z JUL 76
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000
INFO USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 8468

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ASEC, PINS, VE
SUBJECT: NIEHOUS KIDNAPPING - PRESS COMMENTARY ON MRS. NIEHOUS' DEPARTURE, INTERIOR MINISTER'S VIEWS

REF: CARACAS 8386

1. CARACAS DAILIES JULY 10 GAVE FULL COVERAGE WITH PHOTOS TO DEPARTURE TO NEW YORK OF DONNA NIEHOUS, ACCOMPANIED BY HER SON CRAIG THE PREVIOUS DAY ON A PAA FLIGHT. STORIES NOTED THAT SHE WAS ACCOMPANIED TO PLANE BY DISIP AGENTS, AND ACCORDING TO SEVERAL PRESS VERSIONS, ALSO BE AN FBI AGENT "LEONARD ESMOND BROWNSEN" WHO (ACCORDING TO ONE VERSION) ARRIVED TWO DAYS BEFORE SPECIFICALLY TO ACCOMPANY MRS. NIEHOUS BACK TO THE U.S. STORIES ALSO CLAIM THAT REPORTERS ATTEMPTED TO INTERVIEW MRS. NIEHOUS BUT WERE PREVENTED FROM DOING SO BY VENEZUELAN POLICE AND THE "FBI AGENT." OTHER STORIES, HOWEVER, NOTED THAT BROWNSEN WAS MERELY FRIEND OF THE FAMIL6.

2. FURTHER, IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION FROM A NEWSMAN REGARDING THE WHEREABOUTS OF NIEHOUS, INTERIOR MINISTER LEPAGE IS REPORTED TO HAVE REPLIED ON JUNE 9 THAT THE GOV IS WORKING INTENSIVELY TO FIND NIEHOUS AND HIS CAPTORS AND THAT THE GOV HAS NO INDICATION THAT NIEHOUS MAY NOW BE OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY.
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3. COMMENT: EMBASSY HAS LEARNED THAT MR. BROWNSEN IS IN FACT AN EMPLOYEE OF OWENS-ILLINOIS AND A CLOSE FRIEND OF THE NIEHOUS FAMILY WHO CAME TO CARACAS TO ESCORT MRS. NIEHOUS HOME. INDENTIFICATION OF BROWNSEN AS FBI AGENT BY SOME SENSATIONLIST CARACAS PAPERS IS UNFORTUNATE IN THAT IT IS NOT ONLY FALSE BUT MAY BE ALSO READ BY NIEHOUS' CAPTORS AS INDICATING THAT USG HAS CONTINUED TO TAKE ACTIVE ROLE IN PROTECTING MRS. NIEHOUS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: KIDNAPPING, PRESS COMMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ullricre
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976CARACA08468
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760270-0046
From: CARACAS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760769/aaaacipo.tel
Line Count: 69
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 CARACAS 8386
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ullricre
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 JUL 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <04 NOV 2004 by ullricre>
Review Markings:

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US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NIEHOUS KIDNAPPING - PRESS COMMENTARY ON MRS. NIEHOUS' DEPARTURE, INTERIOR MINISTER'S VIEWS
TAGS: ASEC, PINS, VE, (NIEHOUS, WILLIAM F)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006